

Peter de Vries
111 Kenwood Way
San Francisco CA 94127

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Via ECFS
Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

**Re: In the Matter of Petition of USTelecom for Forbearance Pursuant to
47 U.S.C. Section 160(c); WC Docket No. 18-141; Category 1**

Dear FCC,

When the Bell System was broken up, it was because the telephone company said that they wanted to be able to have competition between private telco companies, and get rid of the monopoly to keep prices down. Of course, the prices immediately started inching up. Because, while Bell WAS a monopoly, it was also heavily regulated - which made it responsive to all homes and citizens equally, and also stopped prices at a mostly reasonable level. Now, with no regulations to speak of (except the ones that help the phone companies make profit) they can basically do what they want; including, as it turned out, reabsorbing all the old baby-Bells back into one huge monopoly.

Now, no doubt for the convenience of the consumer, the telephone companies are able to charge what they want, and run the network to their own best advantage. Not unlike the deregulated airlines that now do not have to serve everybody equally, the phone companies can strip off any bits that offend the delicate sensibilities of their profit-monitors, and leave people unable to communicate.

The phone network is not a luxury; it is a public service, and a basic necessity to all people. (So are the utilities and public transit, for that matter.) This country has managed to fall behind most civilised societies in all those categories. The Internet has managed to become just like the telephone systems in that regard. Trying to get service or support from any business via the telephone (especially AT&T!) is essentially impossible. So we are forced to use the Internet in order to accomplish any business. Naturally, this is now a perfect time for your telephone companies to start making life difficult for the public, and generate further profits for themselves again.

Because things are stupidly expensive now, I already cancelled two of my extra telephone lines. I refuse on principle to buy a cellular telephone because, especially compared with other countries, the ones here are so incredibly archaic that they barely work - and they are also WAY too expensive already. The one saving grace for all things telephony is our local provider - Sonic.Net - who not only provide the fastest service available over the 100-plus year-old copper lines that AT&T have hanging from dead trees in our back garden, they also answer their telephones to help customers when those same antediluvian wires (regularly) fail, short out, or get wet and noisy. Of course, Sonic are still at the mercy of AT&T, who then have to come out and duct-tape their network

back together, but at least we know in the meantime that someone cares and has tried to assist us.

At a time when a farmhouse out in the fields of Holland can get giga bit data, TV, phone and everything for a reasonable flat monthly fee (ON WIRES THAT ARE ACTUALLY SAFELY UNDERGROUND!), my house in the city of San Francisco can barely exceed 300 MegaBits per second because of the foul line quality. Sonic.Net are in the process of doing what PacBell and subsequently AT&T have steadily refused to do over the years: replace their cables with high-speed glass-fibre lines. I can see why the telcos are afraid of such competition - they might actually have to make improvements to their network. Imagine the expense! Egad!

America is so far behind in almost all matters of infrastructure that I can understand why the telcos are asking to be allowed to increase profits while doing exactly nothing useful - just like the other "utilities". America is already pretty much a third-world country. Maybe the FCC can try to elevate at least its telephony infrastructure into the 20th century....

Peter de Vries